ii. must be lawfully admitted to the US for permanent residence and possess an I-551 Alien Registration Card,

iii. has resided continuously as a lawful permanent resident in the US for at least 5 years,

iv has been physically present in the US for at least 30 months out of the previous 5 years,

v. has good moral character and has resided within a State/ District for at least 3 months, and

vi must owe allegiance to the Constitution of the USA

(c) Norms of acquisition of citizenship of a country fall within the internal domain of that country and it is not for a foreign government to comment on it

BIMSTEC Summit

2450 SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state.

(a) the details of the benefits derived by India in the recently held BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok,

(b) whether any Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) has been signed in the Summit,

(c) if so, the details thereof, and

(d) in what manner would it help the Indian industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) The Prime Minister attended the First Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Sumit in Bangkok on 31 July, 2004. The Summit identified six priority sectors of cooperation, each with a "lead country" technology (Sri Lanka), transport and communications (India), energy (Myanmar), tourism (India) and fisheries (Thailand). Increased cooperation in these sectors among the BIMSTEC member countries would benefit all the member countries BIMSTEC provides an effective link between South Asia and Southeast Asia with significant potential for deeper economic interaction and integration. It also provides us with a

sub-regional frame work for the development, in particular of the eastern and northeastern regions of India All the leaders unanimously agreed on the need to cooperate in combating international terrorism and important step in this direction is the setting up of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism

(b) and (c) No such agreement was signed at Summit However, the BIMSTEC Framework Agreement on Free Trade Area was singed during the Sixth Ministerial Meeting in Phuket, Thailand in February, 2004 by Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand Bangladesh joined the Agreement in June, 2004 The Framework Agreement provides a roadmap for Free Trade Area Agreements in goods, services, investment and other areas of general economic cooperation The negotiations on FTA in goods are to be begin in September, 2004 and to be concluded by December 2005 The negotiations on FTA in services and investment shall commence in 2005 and be concluded by 2007

(d) The Framework Agreement aims at strengthening and enhancing cooperation in economic, trade and investment among the parties through the progressive liberalization and promotion of trade in goods, services and investment

SAARC Summit

2451 SHRI LALIT SURI Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state

(a) whether a joint declaration was signed and issued after the conclusion of the SAARC Summit held at Islamabad in January this year, and

(b) if so, the details thereof and to what extent it is expected to improve bilateral relations between India and Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH) (a) Yes

(b) The Declaration welcomes the signing of the Framework Agreement on the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) as a major milestone and reaffirmed the commitment of SAARC Members to moving towards a Free Trade Area with the objective of eventually arriving at a South Asian Economic Union